

Feb. 27 - Scripture: Luke 6: 27-49

A verse that speaks to you: "But I tell you who hear me: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Observation: Wow! This section is what it's all about! It's the how-to directions to achieve Jesus' promise: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10). As we follow Him, He asks us to let go---to lose our lives in order to gain them. We do this by emptying ourselves of hatred, bitterness, self-righteousness, selfishness and the spiritual toxins that result from these behaviors or 'sins'. He tells us to "not judge" and "not condemn." But He asks us to go further...to fill ourselves with love...particularly towards our enemy. He tells us to "bless", to "pray", to "give", to "forgive", to "be merciful to the ungrateful and wicked just as our Father is merciful."

The climax comes in verses Luke 6:43-45. When living the full life, we are the "good tree bearing good fruit." But Jesus goes on to say we do this by bringing good things out of the good stored up in the heart. It's all the things above that provide the good things in our hearts to produce our good fruit: "For out of the outflow of [our] hearts, [our] mouths speak."

Application: But how do I do this?! It looks great on paper, but not so easy when you actually have an enemy. How do I love someone who tells lies about me, who cheats and takes from me, who yells at me when I try to reconcile? Jesus shows me how, through the events we celebrate each Easter season, and remember all year long. He shows me by His responses to Pilate, Herod, the chief priests, the guards who mocked Him, Peter who denied Him, a world that despised Him---by allowing Himself to be hung on a cross and saying: "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing". He shares that holy strength with me by sending me His Spirit, who enables me to say those hard words: "God bless_____." I cling to His holy sleeve and allow Him to free me to "let go and let God"...I can't do it without Him. Unfortunately, it's too easy to slip back into my earthbound ways of "But it's not fair!" But, praise God, He's always there waiting for me.

Prayer: Dearest Father in heaven, help me let go of my earthly sense of fairness and justice and to gain your perspective of turning the other cheek. Your way lets me produce 'good fruit'; please hold me tightly on that path. It's so hard, but with you the yoke is easier and the burden is lighter. Especially I thank you for Your sacrifice on the cross, your love for the world, and your constant presence to lead the way to the fulfilled life. Amen, from Your daughter, Marsha.

Writer: Marsha Foote -Bob and I moved here in 2000 from Nebraska after Bob retired to be closer to Mom since she had developed Alzheimer's. I continue to work as a nurse at Palm Bay Hospital and Bob fills lots of roles as husband, dad, grandpa, neighbor, yard man, etc. We have 4 children and almost 8 grandchildren. One of my favorite spiritual books, besides the Bible, is "Hind Feet in High Places." It opened my eyes to the opportunities for growing closer to God through the low places... pain, sorrow, sickness, death. It makes life less scary when I know God has them trumped.